



**US Army Corps
Of Engineers**

Walla Walla District
Public Affairs Office

News Release

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Corps apprentice program graduates four journeymen today

UMATILLA, Ore. -- Four students graduated from Walla Walla District's Apprentice Program today during a 10 a.m. ceremony at McNary Lock and Dam, U.S. Army Corps of Engineers officials announced.

Nick Jarosch, a three-year program graduate and Air Force veteran from Spokane, Wash., became an apprentice via Spokane Community College's electrical maintenance program. Jarosch now works at Lower Granite Lock and Dam as a power house electrician.

John Riser, a three-year program graduate from Rosalia, Wash., became an apprentice via Spokane Community College's machining program. Riser now works at Lower Monumental Lock and Dam as a power house mechanic.

Valerie Corteville, a four-year program graduate and Navy veteran from Pleasant Hill, Ore., now works at McNary Lock and Dam as a power house electrician.

Sam Schlachter, a three-year program graduate from Panama City, Fla., and Navy veteran, now works at McNary Lock and Dam as a power house operator.

The apprentice program, based at McNary Lock and Dam near Umatilla, Ore., develops trades and crafts journeymen to serve in Walla Walla District hydropower facilities. The program graduates six to eight apprentices each year. Depending on prior education, or simultaneous enrollment in a related college education program, students can pursue a three or four-year program to become electrical, mechanical or operations journeymen.

The first year focuses on gaining hydropower knowledge, after which each student selects a craft to pursue as a career. The next two to three years are spent under the guidance of journeymen and a rigid academic curriculum. Academic work includes textbook studies, computer-based training and hands-on experience. During their apprenticeship, students gain work experience at three of the six hydroelectric facilities in the district before they join the workforce as craftspersons.

"Across the Corps, we've recognized the need to plan for a sustainable workforce as a large percentage of our current workforce nears retirement eligibility. This program enables the district to better meet its future craftsman needs. Apprentices learn from the masters, rather than trying to glean that knowledge out of a book at a later time when the experts may not be here to help them," said Terry Filson, Walla Walla District's training officer for the program. "Today's graduation ceremony serves to recognize the students' efforts and welcome them to the ranks of journeymen, and to thank the craftsmen who coached them."

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